



## Roan Plateau

### Timeline

**1910s** – A series of Executive Orders sets aside government-owned petroleum and oil shale reserves, including Naval Oil Shale Reserves No. 1 and 3 on and below the Roan Plateau.

**1977** – Naval Oil Shale Reserves are transferred to the Department of Energy. In the following years DOE develops 24 natural gas wells below the Roan Plateau in NOSR 3. All proceeds go to the National Treasury.

**January 1984** – BLM Glenwood Springs Field Office completes its Resource Management Plan. Under this plan, 17,364 acres of BLM lands that will later be included in the Roan Plateau Planning Area are available for oil and gas leasing.

**November 1997** – The 56,238 acres of Naval Oil Shale Reserves 1 and 3 are transferred to the Department of the Interior through the National Defense Authorization Act. The “transfer act” states that the Secretary of the Interior shall enter into leases with one or more private entities for the purpose of petroleum exploration, development and production as soon as “practicable.” It also requires that the production area primarily below the rim already containing wells be leased within one year. The legislation requires revenues generated from oil and gas leasing and production in the Naval Oil Shale Reserves to be placed in a special fund to clean-up the Anvil Points Oil Shale Research site at the base of the Plateau as well as reimburse the DOE for infrastructure in place.

**March 1999** – BLM signs a Record of Decision making the 12,029-acre production area available for oil and gas leasing. Four leases totaling 8,389 acres – the specific areas containing existing wells and infrastructure – are offered and leased. The remaining acreage of the production area is leased in the August 2008 lease sale.

**November 2000** – BLM begins public scoping on the Roan Plateau Resource Management Plan Amendment. The planning area covered in the amendment includes the 56,238 acres of NOSRs 1 and 3 transferred in 1997, as well as 17,364 acres of lands previously managed by BLM. A public scoping meeting is held in Rifle.

**October 2002** – A 30-day public comment period on six “preliminary alternatives” is held to fully address public issues and concerns through the range of alternatives. Public meetings are held in Rifle, Parachute and Glenwood Springs. This was an additional public comment period exceeding the minimum required under the National Environmental Policy Act and BLM planning regulations.

**November 2004** – BLM releases the Draft Roan Plateau RMP/EIS for a 90-day public comment period. The Draft outlines five alternatives.

**February 2005** – BLM extends the public comment period an additional 30 days to ensure the public has ample opportunity to comment on the plan.

**April 2005** – BLM receives 74,925 comments during the 120-day public comment period; 97 percent are form letters.

**April-September 2005** – BLM holds a series of six meetings with its cooperating agencies, which are the Colorado Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Garfield and Rio Blanco counties, the cities of Rifle and Glenwood Springs, and the town of Parachute. The meetings are open to the public and covered by several media outlets. While not all the cooperators support drilling on top of the Roan Plateau, the group reaches consensus that if drilling takes place, it should follow an innovative DNR proposal that would protect key wildlife habitat, viewsheds and water resources.

**October 2005-May 2006** – BLM continues to analyze public comment and work with its cooperators, especially DNR, which includes Colorado Division of Wildlife, Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, Colorado Geological Survey, and Colorado State Parks.

**May-August 2006** – BLM completes final analyses, documentation and reviews.

**September 7, 2006** – The Roan Plateau Proposed Plan/Final EIS is released for a 30-day public protest period, which officially began with publication of the Notice of Availability in the Federal Register Sept. 15.

**October 15, 2006** – BLM receives 42 protest submissions by the close of the public protest period.

**June 8, 2007** – BLM completes the protest resolution process and issues a Record of Decision for the lands in the Roan Plateau Planning Area not proposed for ACEC (Area of Critical Environmental Concern) designation. The decision covers about 70 percent of the planning area and upholds the proposed decisions in the Proposed Roan Plan. To resolve one protest, BLM initiates a 60-day public comment period limited to the 21,034 acres proposed for ACEC designation.

**August 3, 2007** – Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne agrees BLM will not hold a lease sale on the Roan Plateau for a period of 120 days so that the Governor of Colorado has an opportunity to further understand the Roan Management Plan and provide additional comments. The Secretary states that BLM will make a good faith effort to address the concerns of the State of Colorado.

**August 31, 2007** – The additional public comment period on the ACECs closes. Since the original comment period opened in June, BLM has received about 42,000 comments, 41,539 of which are form letters from the Natural Resource Defense Council.

**September 6, 2007** – BLM begins implementing the travel management decisions from the ROD signed in June. This includes closing about 100 miles of routes to motorized vehicles, largely to protect wildlife as recommended by the Colorado Division of Wildlife.

**December 20, 2007** – The Governor provides views on managing the Roan Plateau, including a phased leasing approach.

**March 13, 2008** – BLM issues the second Record of Decision for the Roan Plateau Resource Management Plan Amendment addressing the proposed Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. The ROD designates 21,034 acres as ACECs and upholds the strict stipulations in place to protect these areas and BLM's phased development approach.

**July 11, 2008** – A consortium of environmental groups files a lawsuit in District Court challenging the BLM's Roan Plateau Resource Management Plan Amendment.

**August 8, 2008** – Secretaries of Interior and Energy certify that the Anvil Points cleanup fund is adequate to cover clean-up of the research site, a requisite under the 1997 Transfer Act before the State can begin receiving bonus bid and royalty payments from oil and gas leasing and development in the Naval Oil Shale Reserves.

**August 14, 2008** – The Roan Plateau lease sale generates \$113.9 million, the highest dollar amount ever for an oil and gas lease sale in the lower 48 states. The State of Colorado receives its share of 49 percent of the revenue – nearly \$56 million. A total 54,631 acres in 31 parcels were sold (about 18,000 federal acres within the planning area were leased in 1999 or earlier.) BLM has received 17 unique protests on the lease sale, which include more than 14,000 form letter protests. The leases are not issued until all protests are resolved. Vantage Energy out of Denver wins all 15 parcels on top of the Plateau.

**September 29, 2008** – BLM announces resolution of the protests and issues the Roan Plateau leases.

**October 2008** – The companies awarded leases intervene in the lawsuit, allowing them to participate in settlement discussions.

**June 2009** – Bill Barrett Corp purchases a 90 percent interest in Vantage's Roan Plateau leases for \$60 million. It joins the settlement talks.

**November 6, 2009** – The judge orders parties in this lawsuit to attend a settlement conference. Parties continue settlement meetings over the next year.

**October 20, 2010** – After nearly a year of discussions among the parties involved, the court considers settlement talks to be at an impasse. A U.S. District Court judge will now rule on the case.

**December 23, 2011** – Judge Marcia Krieger issues an Order Directing Oral Argument requiring BLM to identify supporting evidence in the administrative record addressing four

issues: a NEPA alternative (the “Community Alternative”) that contemplated directional drilling from below the rim, the 20-year window for assessing environmental impacts, the basis for modeling air impacts for wells drilled within the Planning Area but not outside the Planning Area, and the ratio of ozone precursors generated by the project.

**May 22, 2012** – Oral arguments are held in District Court in Denver.

**June 22, 2012** – Judge Krieger issues her decision. The Court upholds BLM’s interpretation of the Transfer Act and its consideration of a No Leasing Alternative. However, the Court sets aside the decision and remands to action to BLM for further consideration because it found BLM failed to sufficiently address the Community Alternative; failed to sufficiently address the cumulative air quality impacts of its decision in conjunction with anticipated oil and gas development on private lands outside the Planning Area; and failed to adequately address the issue of potential ozone impacts. The Court does not invalidate the leases that have been issued in the Roan Plateau Planning Area.

**August 2012** – Judge Krieger’s decision is appealed by leaseholders and plaintiffs.

**January 25, 2013** – BLM announces it will begin a supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) to address deficiencies in BLM’s earlier Roan Plateau analysis identified in Judge Krieger’s decision. The SEIS will address a full range of alternatives for extracting the natural gas resources in the Roan Plateau Planning Area.

**November 21, 2014** – Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell, Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper and U.S. Senator Michael Bennet announce a settlement has been reached among the leaseholders and plaintiffs. Under the settlement, 17 of the 19 leases on top of the Roan Plateau are to be canceled. The remaining two leases on top and 12 leases below the rim are to be retained. BLM will analyze the settlement as one alternative in the SEIS. The settlement alternative would prevent re-leasing the area of the 17 leases on top for the life of the SEIS decision.

**January 16, 2015** – As part of the settlement agreement, the BLM cancels the 17 of 19 leases on top of the Roan Plateau, all held by Bill Barrett Corp., which is refunded the approximately \$47.6 million paid for the leases in 2008.

**Nov. 20, 2015** – BLM releases the Draft SEIS for a 90-day public comment period. The Draft includes four possible alternatives: a No Action, which would return the leasing decisions to pre-2006; a Settlement Alternative largely reflecting terms of the Nov. 2014 settlement; a “Community Alternative” as directed by the 2012 court decision; and the original 2006 Proposed Plan.

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